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THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.—ROMANS I., 16.

THIS Epistle was addressed by St. Paul to the Christians at Rome, which was then the splendid and voluptuous capital of the world, and the grand fountain of all the errors and superstitions by which mankind were deluded and enslaved. He had already promulgated the salvation of Jesus in many other important cities; and glorious was the success which had attended his labors. But this could not satisfy that sacred ambition which was constantly urging him on to new efforts, and to more extended triumphs. He was animated by a fervent desire to "preach the Gospel at Rome also," that he might impart to the believers there "some spiritual gift," for the increase of their religious stability and comfort; and that he might gather, from the ranks of the unconverted, precious "fruits" of his ministry, as he had done "among other Gentiles." And although, in the providence of God, this desire was not at that time fulfilled, yet was he subsequently permitted to visit the field for which he so earnestly longed—not, indeed, as he here prays, by "a prosperous journey"—but through a series of perils and sufferings,—and to enter it, as an "ambassador of Christ," it is true—but an ambassador in bonds.

In our text, the apostle assigns the cause of his readiness to preach the Gospel at Rome. It sprang from his entire confidence in the truth, the excellency, and the power of the divine doctrines which he was commissioned to teach. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Although he knew it to be simple and unostentatious in its structure, with no imposing rites, or august ceremonial, to overawe the senses of men; and although he was well

aware that by the learned and great of this world it was accounted "foolishness;" yet, such was his perfect persuasion of its inherent wisdom and might, that he was prepared fearlessly to proclaim it, even in the celebrated metropolis of civilization and refinement; where pagan science boasted of its exploits, and false philosophy gloried in its strength; where wealth and pomp and imperial power lent their patronage to vice and pollution; where the altars of a hundred deities smoked with perpetual incense, and idolatry sat enthroned in her thousand temples.

But this undoubting assurance of the worth and verity of the Gospel was not peculiar to the apostle; nor was it confined to those who, in that age, shared in his evangelical labors and sacrifices. It is the privilege of believers at all times, and under every aspect which the religion of Christ, in its onward course, may exhibit. The sincere disciple of our own day, who has received "the truth as it is in Jesus," and experienced, in his heart and life, its renovating and purifying energies, can repose the same unfaltering trust in its value and efficacy, and in its celestial origin, as a scheme, and the only scheme, provided by the Almighty for the salvation of men. The text, therefore, presents, as the subject of discourse, the following proposition:

The believer has no cause to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

I. *He has no cause to be ashamed of its Author.* The plan of the Gospel was devised and appointed, in the councils of eternity, by God the Father; but it was introduced and carried into effect by Christ the Son. He is, therefore, its immediate Author. Accordingly, it is denominated in the text, "the Gospel of Christ." To him its execution and administration were specially committed. He came down from Heaven to make those revelations of the divine will which it contains. He taught its perfect precepts. He procured, by his obedience and death, its boundless provisions of mercy. And he offered the all-sufficient expiation for sin, which constitutes its leading feature, and most essential element.

Now, of the illustrious Being, who was thus the founder of the Christian system, there is no reason to be ashamed. It is true, that the circumstances of humiliation in which he appeared in our world, and the reproach and ignominy attending the manner of his departure from it, have ever been regarded by human pride with disgust and scorn. But never was contempt so misplaced. Though born in obscurity, and cradled in want, yet was he the Son of God, and the Lord from Heaven; and around the lowly manger in which he lay, there shone a lustre brighter than all the splendor of palaces, and the magnificence of kings. And his death, viewed in its momentous bearings on the government of God, and on the eternal welfare of men, so far from being a scene of shame and degradation, was the very highest display of glory and majesty.

Notwithstanding the profound abasement to which he submitted, everything connected with his character and with his history was worthy of the loftiest regard and reverence.

If we consider him merely in his human nature, and contemplate the various and consummate excellences which he exhibited, we shall perceive the most ample grounds for confidence and exultation in him. Think of the perfect wisdom which he manifested in all his teachings and actions; of his unparalleled meekness under injury and persecution; of the spotless purity of his life, which not even his bitterest enemies could assail; of the entire devotion to his Father's will, and the absorbing regard for eternal things, which marked all his feelings and conduct; and of that sublime, matchless benevolence, which prompted him to unceasing efforts in doing good to the bodies and the souls of men, which led him to the sorrows of Gethsemane, and the tortures of the cross, and caused him even there to pray for the murderers that spiked his limbs, and mocked his agonies. Is this a character of which to be ashamed? What parallel to it can be found among all the sages, philosophers, and reformers, that ever arose on earth. They all partook of the corruption common to humanity, and many of them were remarkable for their vices. Christ alone was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." They sought, in a greater or less degree, only to establish systems which should exalt and perpetuate their own renown. Christ toiled and suffered for the glory of his Father, and the moral emancipation of a world. They lived and died like men. Christ lived and died like a God.

But not only is the Author of Christianity distinguished above the founders of all other religious systems by the unsullied perfection of his human character; he is also placed at an infinite remove from them by the divinity of his Person. Though dwelling in a mortal form, he was "God over all, blessed for ever." He was that Eternal Word, which "was in the beginning with God, and was God;" but which, to achieve the redemption of the lost, assumed our nature, and sojourned in this blighted abode of guilt and woe. In this frail tabernacle of dust, he exhibited the living embodiment of the Divine Essence, and possessed and wielded all the attributes of Jehovah. He moved amidst the scenes and habitations of earth, the incarnate Deity—"God manifest in the flesh!"

In what a new and wondrous light does this fact present the qualities which he displayed, and the deeds which he performed! "His love becomes the love of a God, to be measured only by the stoop of his condescension from a throne to a cross—from the heights of bliss to the depths of agony—from the adoration of angels to the scoffs of mortals." His teachings are the teachings of Omniscience. His miracles are the product of illimitable power.

His death is the seal of an infinite Sacrifice. His resurrection is the putting forth of his own energy—the rising of Him who “hath life in himself,” and who “quickeneth whomsoever he will.” And his ascension is the triumphal return of an almighty conqueror to the empire of the heavens, there to dispense the blessings which he has purchased, and to prepare everlasting mansions for all his followers.

With what a transcendent glory is the Gospel thus invested ! He, who created the spheres, and built the worlds, and whose omnipotent agency upholds and governs the realms of matter and of mind, established also the dispensation of Grace, and wrought out all its amazing benefits. And shall I be ashamed of a religion which has the Lord of the universe for its Author ? What though I see him clothed in humanity, and descending to the lowest humiliation ? It is Divinity, veiling its overpowering glories, and stooping from its dazzling seat, to the deep abyss in which an apostate race were sunk, to raise them to holiness and Heaven. What though I behold him expiring amid the ignominy and the horrors of crucifixion ? It is the Godhead, working out the ransom of mankind, by satisfying the claims of Justice, vindicating the dishonored Law, and making a Propitiation for iniquity, which should become the central object in the achievements of Jehovah, and attract for ever the wondering regards of his intelligent creation. How does this feature of the Gospel throw far back into deepest shade all the schemes which men have invented for the amelioration of their state ! These bear no impress of God—no stamp of celestial authority, on which conscience can rest, and hope repose. But Christianity is accredited by the very signature of the Most High. It beams with the effulgence of Heavenly Truth. It stands before us, the only Remedy of the ruined, the only Refuge for the guilty ; towering upward above all human systems in the majesty of its Divine Founder ; inviting the millions of the perishing to seek safety beneath its ample protection ; breathing peace in its promises ; and commanding devout awe and reverent obedience by the sanctions of an unveiled eternity. Of such a Gospel, emanating from such a source, never, O never let the believer be ashamed,

II. The believer has no cause to be ashamed of *the testimony on which the truth of the Gospel rests*. The evidences of our holy religion are so full and so conclusive, that no candid mind can resist their force. Even a cursory view of them will show that they amount to the most perfect moral demonstration. Look, for instance, at the long train of circumstances which prepared the way for this grand manifestation of Divine mercy ;—the separation of the chosen seed, their settlement in the land of Canaan, and their continuance as a distinct people through all the vicissitudes

of their eventful history, that they might preserve the knowledge of the true God, and furnish a lineage for their future Messiah. Reflect upon the numerous and striking prophecies by which his coming was foretold—prophecies, commencing with the promise given to our first parents, and extending, along the succession of ages, with ever increasing clearness and fullness, down to the close of the Old Testament Record—prophecies, so ample in their scope, and so minute in their details, that had we not the most undeniable proof of their having been written centuries before the occurrence of the facts to which they relate, we might well regard them as history rather than prediction. These prophecies describe, not only the character, offices, and works of Christ, but also the peculiar manner of his dissolution and of his burial, and even fix, with an accuracy which none can mistake, the *time* when He should “make an end of sin” by his atoning sacrifice. And with what literal exactness were they all fulfilled in the life and death of our Lord! Contemplate, too, the imposing array of types and symbols, of sacrificial rites, and emblematic observances, by which, for so long a period, his incarnation and sufferings were foreshadowed, and the expectation of him kept alive in the minds of men. Not only was his advent the great theme on which the seers of old poured forth their most sublime and enrapturing strains, but the anticipation of it pervaded all the institutions and ceremonies of the Jewish economy, and formed to the devout and pious, the absorbing object of desire, shining out, on the vision of Faith, the lone star of Hope in their darkened firmament. And when the Redeemer, at length, appeared, what manifold and abundant confirmation was given to the divine authority of his mission! Angels announced his birth, and proclaimed him as that exalted Mediator, whose visit to our world should bring a boundless revenue of glory to God, and diffuse peace and holiness on earth. At his baptism, the Father, with an audible voice, declared him to be his “beloved son, in whom he was well pleased,” and placed on his brow the bright signet of divinity, by causing the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, to descend from Heaven, and rest upon him. After Christ had commenced his public ministry, how numberless and convincing were the miracles which he wrought, to demonstrate the truth of his claims. At his command, diseases fled—the deaf heard—the blind saw—the lame walked—lepers were cleansed—devils departed from the bodies of the possessed—the dead rose up from their graves—the chainless winds were hushed, and the angry waves grew calm. Heaven, earth, and hell, were alike subject to his control. Now, when we consider that these miracles were performed, not in privacy and solitude, but often in the presence of his most envenomed foes, and always in such situations as to preclude all possibility of collusion or imposture, we cannot but

view them as the product of Almighty power—the palpable attestation of Jehovah to the Messiahship of Jesus.

Not less decisive is the evidence arising from the nature of the doctrines which the Savior taught. He made known the only method by which apostate man can be restored to the favor of a righteous God, and introduced a system of pure and heavenly morality, of which the wisest philosophers had never dreamed, and to which all subsequent researches have added nothing. And having offered up his life on the cross, to expiate human guilt, he gave the crowning seal to his celestial commission, by rising from the dead, appearing alive to his disciples, and then ascending, before their eyes, to the sphere of his original glory. Nor, after his departure, was his Gospel left without witness. The Holy Spirit was sent down to supply his place, and confirm the preaching of the apostles, by “signs, and wonders, and divers miracles,” and an inexhaustible affluence of supernatural gifts. And thus corroborated and energized, with what matchless efficacy did the message of salvation fall from their lips! Sustained by this heavenly agency, how rapid and triumphant was their course from city to city, and from province to province! Before their resistless onset, the gods of the heathen fell, the gloom of superstition vanished, the oracle and the shrine were abandoned, and the vast empire of idolatry crumbled into dust. Their voice reached alike the lonely desert, and the crowded walks of men—the peasant in his hut, the craftsman at his toil, the philosopher in his study, and the king on his throne. The bigoted Jew, the haughty Roman, the cultivated Greek, the rude Barbarian, trembled at their appeals, and bowed beneath the power of the doctrines which they published. Within the lapse of a single generation, they carried the victorious banner of the cross over every region of the then civilized earth. And, during all the ages that have since rolled away, the Gospel has lost nothing of its original and deathless vitality. Entombed, for centuries, in the deep grave of papal corruption, it has emerged from the festering mass, pure, elastic, unimpaired. Invulnerable as the sacred bush, burning but not consumed, it has survived every trial of its truth, and every assault of its enemies. Opposition and violence, in all possible forms, have been arrayed against it. The rage of infidelity, the wrath of Antichrist, and the sleepless malice of Hell, have done their utmost to overthrow and annihilate it. But, preserved by that omnipotent Spirit whose presence is ever with it, it is still fresh and vigorous, as when it first went forth, in its youthful might, to subdue the hearts of mankind; and fraught with indestructible life, and clad in celestial armor, it is now girding itself anew for the conquest of the world.

Have I, then, reason to be ashamed of a religion whose origin from the living God is demonstrated by such numerous and irrefragable proofs? Shall the infidel taunt me with giving credence to

unsupported dogmas, and building my everlasting hopes on a mere hypothesis? No; standing on the firm foundations of the Christian Faith, I can smile at his bootless scorn,—assured that the scheme of redeeming Grace to which I have trusted my soul, is based on eternal verity; and that, amid the fluctuations of all human theories, here alone is the immovable Rock, which the waves of time and the floods of hostility can never shake; and which shall remain, fast-sealed as Heaven's throne, when the pillars of the universe give way, and earth and skies are no more.

III. The believer has no cause to be ashamed of the *means by which the Gospel is promulgated*. Had Christianity been the invention of men, they would doubtless have sought to advance it by force of arms—by alliance with the civil power—or by the pomp and pageantry of a splendid ritual, suited to dazzle the eye, and enthral the senses. Such are the methods which human wisdom, in its blindness, has always adopted. And the fact, that the Divine Author of the Gospel has chosen an entirely different mode of procedure, has ever been regarded by the proud and great of this world, as fixing on his religion the charge of folly. But in this, they have only evinced their own ignorance and fatuity. It is characteristic of the omniscient and almighty One, to accomplish his benign purposes, by causes simple in their nature, silent in their operation, but most stupendous in their effects. In accordance with this law of his administration, he has “ordained to save, by the foolishness of preaching, them that believe;” and to promote and establish the interests of his Church, by the naked proclamation of “Christ crucified,” connected with the prayers and efforts of his people, and rendered effectual by the promised influences of his Spirit. And these instrumentalities are eminently adapted to produce the results for which they were appointed. While the means which human short-sightedness would have employed, could only have subdued the bodies of men, or enlisted the brute homage of their passions; those which God has devised enlighten the understanding, convince the judgment, awaken the conscience, rouse the deep sensibilities of the soul, lead captive all its affections, and bring the whole outward and inward man into subjection to the sceptre of grace.

How full of moral sublimity is the process by which the Gospel thus makes its way through the earth! Compare with it the manner in which Mohammedanism and Popery have endeavored to disseminate their respective creeds. The former was extended by the sword. “The Koran or the scimeter,” was the motto which it bore aloft on its blood-red flag; and ruined cities, depopulated countries, and the wail of slaughtered millions, marked its course of desolation and havoc. The latter has gained its conquests by political intrigue, and unholy union with the state; by ministering

to the vices and ambition of kings ; by decking its harlot form in the gorgeous drapery of imposing ceremonies ; by fraud, imposture, and "lying wonders ;" and by the terrible array of its anathemas, inquisitorial tortures, dungeons, and flames. Wherever its cause has triumphed, its trophies have been the damnation of its deluded and besotted votaries, the tears and groans of persecuted piety, and the bleaching bones of God's murdered saints. In what wide contrast to all this do the movements of genuine Christianity appear ! Whether we contemplate it as it was carried forward by the apostles in primitive times, or as it is now propagated in its purity, how grand, how godlike, is its calm yet resistless march ! With no dependence on princes and potentates, no connexion with secular authority, no resort to meretricious arts, or worldly wisdom, but relying on the simple preaching of the cross, and the blessing of Heaven, it advances along its victorious path, majestic, peaceful, bloodless ; erecting its throne in human hearts ; gathering its laurels from the sorrows it relieves, and the souls it regenerates ; and diffusing, like some broad and tranquil river, wherever it comes, life, holiness, and joy. Nowhere, in the working of mere earthly systems, can agencies be found so truly sublime ; and however they may be undervalued or despised by the sceptical and irreligious, the Christian will glory in them, as fitted to the ends for which they were designed, elevated in their character, and crowned with the richest tokens of the divine approval.

IV. The believer has no cause to be ashamed of the adaptation of the Gospel to the wants of mankind. All the plans ever brought forward by philosophers and moralists, to reform the corruptions, and alleviate the miseries of humanity, have been wholly unsuited to the circumstances of the race for whose benefit they were intended. They have regarded man as fallen indeed, yet as possessing in himself all the resources requisite for his own recovery, and as needing nothing but the correction of his external conduct ; while the incentives to virtue, with which they have sought to supply him, have been derived from present expediency, and the interest of this fugitive life. Well may the authors and adherents of such systems blush at their impotence and vanity. The doctrines which they teach, and the rules of action which they prescribe, are as powerless against the force of human depravity, as the arm of an infant is to chain the whirlwind, or stay the rushing avalanche.

But the religion of Christ is open to no such objection. It is precisely fitted to the nature and condition of man, and meets all the tremendous exigencies in which he is involved. It contemplates him as a sinner, helpless and perishing ; condemned by the sentence of a righteous law to eternal punishment ; unable to make any satisfaction to offended Justice ; and destitute alike of the

strength and the will to return to God, and render him an acceptable obedience. But, for this state of utter ruin, it reveals an all-sufficient remedy. It sets forth the perfect merits of the Lord Jesus, who, by his atoning death, and glorified ascension, has honored the broken covenant, answered the claims of infinite Majesty, and opened the gate of Heaven to the penitent and believing. It presents the Holy Spirit, the blessed Agent of conversion, as ready, by his almighty influence, to illumine the benighted soul, restore its perverted energies, eradicate its loathsome corruptions, and stamp it afresh with the lost image of its Maker. And it draws, from the boundless compassion of the Son of God, from the dreadful guilt of rejecting his mercy, from the solemn scenes of the judgment, and the glories and terrors of eternity, motives of overwhelming weight, calculated to call forth every slumbering faculty in the great concern of obtaining the favor of the Most High, of perfecting holiness in his fear, and insuring a title to the inheritance of the skies.

Thus is the relief afforded by the Gospel commensurate with all the necessities of undone men. Whenever its provisions are fully embraced, iniquity is pardoned and washed away; the sinner is renewed in righteousness, reconciled to God, and accepted and justified before him; the prodigal is brought back to his Father's house; the wanderer from Heaven—the exile from hope and happiness—is reclaimed, and invested anew with all his forfeited privileges; the rebel against the divine government is changed into a loving and faithful subject; and the lawless disturber of society, the profligate reveller in crime, is cleansed and sanctified, and furnished with high and commanding principles of conduct, which lead him to restrain his unhallowed propensities, and live from day to day in view of the momentous realities of the world to come. How evident, then, is it, that a religion so amply qualified to reach all the evils which afflict the apostate children of earth, is worthy of the utmost esteem and confidence!

V. The believer has no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel, because, in the salvation which it offers, *the power of God is specially manifested*. The omnipotence of Jehovah shows itself in all the operations of his hand. The creation of the material universe, and the ceaseless providence by which it is upheld and directed, declare to the most thoughtless observer his uncontrollable energy. But in none of his works is this attribute so strikingly exhibited, as in that spiritual renovation by which he transforms depraved and alienated hearts into his own likeness, and prepares them for the bliss of his kingdom. To this the apostle refers, when he adduces, as a principal ground of his glorying in the Gospel, the fact, that “it is the power of God unto salvation;” or, in other words, that God signally puts forth his power in rendering it

savingly efficacious. Without this exertion of Divine might, the Gospel, notwithstanding all its priceless stores of mercy, could never be instrumental in regenerating and sanctifying a single soul. So obstinate is the impenitence of men, so wedded are they to their evil courses, that, if left to their own choice, they would for ever reject all the invitations of redeeming Love. Whenever they do renounce their opposition, and submit to the Savior, it is because they are "made willing in the day of God's power." And how marvellous is that display of his power by which such a result is produced! Reflect upon the previous character of those whom he thus brings back to their allegiance, and inspires with a cordial affection for his authority and laws. In common with all the descendants of our fallen progenitor, they are, by nature, in a state of open rebellion against the supreme and rightful King; estranged from the Father of their spirits; living in utter forgetfulness, or bold defiance of him; disregarding his commands; abusing his bounties; spurning the calls of his compassion; and pressing on in the way of sin, heedless alike of his expostulations and his threatenings. But, in the midst of this infatuated career, God arrests them by an act of his sovereign, irresistible grace. Having given them to his Son as the reward of his sufferings, and chosen them in him before the world began—at his own appointed time he visits them from on high; pours the light of his truth into their darkened minds; shows them their fearful criminality and danger; creates them anew in Christ Jesus; produces within them repentance and faith; blots out their manifold transgressions; sheds abroad his love in their hearts; and adopts them into his holy and blessed family. And after he has thus united them to himself, he sustains and guides them in all their future pilgrimage; keeps alive the flame of their piety; purifies them more and more; shields them in the hour of temptation; succors them under every trial; bestows on them unspeakable comforts; conveys their souls, at death, to the mansions of Paradise; and will finally raise their bodies from the dust of the sepulchre, and install their whole ransomed and glorified being in the ever enduring beatitudes of Heaven. Where can we find a manifestation of almightiness so astonishing as this? If one of those luminous globes which God has hung in the skies to cheer and bless us, were to wander from its course, and rush in wild disorder through the fields of space, spreading confusion and ruin among its sister orbs; how should we admire the power that restored it to its appointed path, and caused it to revolve again in beauty and harmony. But far more wonderful is the exhibition of divine power, when a soul, "dead in trespasses and sins," is quickened into spiritual life, inasmuch as the work is in itself more difficult, and the benefits arising from it indescribably greater. In forming and preserving the worlds, the subject on which God acts is mere matter, passive and uncon-

scious, with neither ability nor inclination to oppose his will. But in the conversion and salvation of men, he has to deal with mind, rational, intelligent mind, endowed with volition and responsibility, and that must be impelled by moral, not physical, force;—with mind, imperishable and deathless; possessing vast and ever growing capacities of happiness and misery; and which shall live on for ever in measureless joy, or infinite despair, when suns and planets have vanished from their spheres, and are quenched in everlasting darkness.

How glorious and encouraging is this feature of the Gospel! "It is the power of God unto salvation." Omnipotence is pledged to its success. This is the cardinal truth which gives it its highest value, and its certain efficacy. This is the strong anchor which prevents the whole of our revolted race from going headlong to perdition. This is the infallible provision which secures the ultimate recovery of all who are included in the Covenant of Grace.

VI. The believer has no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel, *because it eminently illustrates the holiness of God.* That it does so, is plainly taught by the apostle, when he affirms that "therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith;"—that is, through the exercise of faith, it makes known, to the apprehension of faith, God's method of justification by the imputed merits of Christ; which, while it pardons and saves the believing sinner, demonstrates the rectitude of Jehovah, and sacredly guards his inviolable honor. However desirous the Almighty might be to manifest his clemency to mankind, he could not do it in any manner that should compromise his other perfections, or lead the subjects of his moral government to question the purity of its administration. The safety and happiness of the rational empire over which he presides, require him to preserve, at all hazards, the sanctity of his law, and maintain the rights of his infinite sovereignty. And in devising a plan for the salvation of sinners, the great question to be settled—a question which the loftiest archangel could never have answered—was, how God could extend forgiveness to those who had rebelled against him, without appearing to countenance rebellion, to detract from its enormity, and thus afford license to its commission. In the scheme of the Gospel, divine Wisdom has solved this tremendous problem. By giving up to death his only begotten Son, as our Substitute and Surety, Jehovah has made, to the whole intelligent universe, a most convincing and impressive demonstration of his abhorrence of sin, and of his unchangeable purpose to uphold the sacredness of his authority. All his perfections are reconciled and harmonized in the sacrifice of Christ. On Calvary's awful brow, beneath the gloom of the shrouded heavens, and amid the throes of the trembling earth,

truth and mercy met and mingled, righteousness and peace embraced each other. And now when the contrite offender, casting himself on the atonement of Jesus, is pardoned and received into favor, every attribute of God consents to the deed of amnesty. His holiness is displayed and vindicated; his law is magnified and made honorable; and the stream of his love can flow forth to all who repent and believe, without impinging against any of the abutments of his justice, or shaking a single pillar of his throne. Who can estimate the worth of that religion which, in the very acquittal of the guilty, exhibits, in the most prominent and affecting light, the inflexible righteousness of Heaven's King, and spreads a salutary awe through every rank of accountable beings?

VII. The believer has no cause to be ashamed of *the effects which the Gospel has already produced*. If we consider merely the influence which it has exerted on the well-being of man in the present life, we shall perceive abundant reason for rejoicing in it. "It is true, that ignorance, error, fanaticism, persecution, and bad morals—the product of a corrupted Gospel—have often been charged upon Christianity itself." But this is like ascribing the blights, that the harvest sometimes receives from the clouds and storms of a turbid atmosphere, to the sun which, though obscured, still shines serene and pure in the upper sky. The perversions of the Gospel, emanating from human depravity, are no evidence against its own inherent usefulness. "We know, also, that the enemies of our holy religion once loved to contrast the fancied virtues of pagan lands with the vices of those which are nominally Christian. But the more accurate knowledge which has lately been acquired, of the state of unevangelized nations both in ancient and modern times, has silenced this malignant argument, and proved that Christianity, even in its worst forms, is altogether superior in its moral tendencies, to the best systems of Heathenism which the world has ever seen. When, however, we speak of Christianity as acting beneficially on the temporal condition of men, we intend no reference to those vile apostasies which have usurped its venerable name. What have we to do with the idolatries of the Papal, or the superstitions of the Greek, Church? Our Bible spurns them; and in proof of this, they have spurned the Bible, well knowing that its testimony must be stifled, ere they can pass off their cheats and impostures under its authoritative sanction. Of the Gospel of 'the man of sin' we might be ashamed; of the Gospel of the Son of God, never. No; wherever this has come—whether breaking through the gloom of partially enlightened Christendom, or dawning as the first beam of day on the long night of pagan darkness—the effect has been everywhere the same; from the parched and blasted soil, barren of all good, and fertile only in weeds and poisons, have sprung up the fruits of

righteousness, benevolence, and peace." To its influence we owe, directly or indirectly, all the improvement which, for eighteen hundred years, has taken place in the circumstances of society. It has promoted civilization; having rescued a large portion of mankind from the barbarism in which they were once sunk, and where they were given up to debasing vices, the prey of unbridled passions, moving on, in wretchedness here, to a more wretched hereafter. It has modified the systems of human government, rendering them more favorable to the rights and liberties of the subject, and more accordant with its own merciful character. It has mitigated the cruelties and horrors of war, and is fast driving the fell scourge itself from the face of the earth. It has abolished slavery in many countries, and has pronounced its extermination in all. It has given activity and scope to the human mind, enlarged the boundaries of knowledge, widened the range of invention and discovery, and contributed greatly to the advancement of science and the useful arts. It has operated benignly on the domestic and social relations, teaching men their duties to themselves and to each other, diffusing a spirit of fraternal love, restraining selfishness, and inculcating submission to law and order. It has multiplied far and wide institutions of kindness and charity for the removal of want, and the alleviation of distress. It has comforted millions under the pressure of sorrow; dried the tears of the mourner; lightened the burdens of the oppressed, and soothed, with its unspeakable consolations, the anguish of the dying. Thus has it refined, elevated, and blessed the children of men, in their pilgrimage below.

These, however, are only its incidental effects. They are but the indirect, though precious, fruits which it scatters along its path on its march to immortality. The main benefits which it has conferred, are to be found in the countless thousands whom it has delivered from the condemnation of sin, purified from all their corruptions, and translated to the bright abodes of never-ending felicity. When we think of the shining myriads which it has already gathered around the throne of God and the Lamb—of the abyss of ruin from which they have been saved—of the ineffable glory to which they are exalted—of the eternal career of wisdom, holiness, and seraphic joy which lies before them, in what high estimation should we hold that Gospel through whose instrumentality all this has been accomplished! Viewing it, then, in this two-fold aspect—contemplating, on the one hand, the blessings with which it has strewed this world, and, on the other, the millions of sanctified spirits with which it has colonized Heaven—how emphatically may we each respond to the apostle, and say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!"

VIII. Lastly, there is no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel,

when we look forward to its final results. All that has yet been effected by it is but preparatory to its future achievements—the beginning of its ultimate and universal triumphs. Inspiration has expressly assured us, that it shall continue to extend its operations, and to multiply its victories, until it has filled the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. In the providence of God, every obstacle to its onward course shall disappear. The supineness and indifference of its professors—the human additions which weaken and disfigure it—the empty formalism, the wide-spread errors, the ecclesiastical hierarchies, which arrogate its name, while they are traitors to its cause—together with every form of secular opposition—shall all be removed. Bright and uncontaminated, as it first sprang into life from the lips of its Divine Originator, it shall go forth among all the kindreds of men, over every sea, and island, and continent,—bearing with it all its boundless treasures of mercy—annihilating all idolatry and false religion—overthrowing every species of oppression and tyranny—conforming all opinions, customs, and institutions to its own heavenly standard—subduing all hearts to its gentle sway—and converting this long polluted and sin-burdened globe into a mighty censer, which, as it rolls round in the hands of the great High Priest, shall send up to him, from all its regenerated children, the pure offering of love, and the sweet incense of praise. Then shall it have done its “perfect work.” Then shall dawn the Jubilee of the creation. Then shall the differing tribes of mankind, cemented by the golden bond of Christianity, become one family; and over the vast sisterhood of nations, dove-like Peace shall wave her sunny wings. Then shall the last vestige of the curse be effaced. And then shall be heard, loud and joyous, as the hymn of angels at the birth of our world, the anthem of that world recovered, “Now is come salvation and the kingdom of our God;” while Heaven, catching the rapturous strain, shall respond to earth, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

When that glorious day shall arrive; when this revolted province of Jehovah’s empire shall have been reclaimed to its allegiance, and restored to its primeval beauty; when all its ransomed inhabitants shall spend their existence here in holy conformity to the Divine will, and then pass to their home above, peopling the realms of immortality with a multitude which no man can number—how overwhelming will be the proofs of the value and efficacy of the Gospel! And when, at last, this terrestrial economy shall close, and all the scenes of this momentous drama be wound up—should it be our blessed lot to be found among the glorified ones who shall be saved from its burning wreck—O, with what unutterable delight, standing on the plains of bliss, and reviewing all that the Gospel hath wrought, shall we exclaim, in concert with the long line of confessors and martyrs who sealed their testimony

to it with their blood, "We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!"

The subject will now be concluded with a few brief reflections, naturally arising from it.

1. *What supreme honor and affectionate homage are due to the Son of God.* To his atonement and intercession we are indebted for all the unsearchable riches of the Gospel, and for all its amazing benefits, past, present, and to come. Never, then, should we withhold from him the tribute of grateful love, and of reverent worship. Let us, my brethren, enthrone him in our inmost souls; consecrate to him the service of all our faculties; and ever regard him as the great Fountain of our spiritual life, the chief Object of our desire on earth, and the central Attraction in the glories of Heaven.

2. *The Gospel demands from us the most cordial acceptance, and the most decided avowal.* If it be of such incalculable worth, involving our dearest interests in time and in eternity, how thankfully should we embrace it, and yield ourselves to its control. With what unblenching firmness should we profess it before men, declaring our attachment to it in the presence of opposers and gainsayers, exemplifying its principles in our conduct, and "holding forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." And with what earnest zeal and untiring self-sacrifice should we labor to bring the impenitent around us to a saving reception of its truths; and to extend the knowledge of it among all the families of our ruined race, as the only antidote to the ills which they suffer, and the only lamp that can direct their steps through the darkness of this world, to the splendors of eternal day.

3. *How great is the guilt and folly of those who are "ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."* All are chargeable with being ashamed of it, who refuse to accept its grace, and to bow to its requirements. On each of you, then, my unconverted hearers, this dreadful imputation lies. And, O, what tongue can describe—what mind can adequately conceive—the extent of your criminality and madness! You are ashamed of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God"—of that Gospel which his adorable Son died to procure—of that Gospel which is the sovereign balm for all the miseries of sin—of that Gospel which has already achieved so much for an outcast world, as to fill Heaven with rapture—of that Gospel which is the only defence of your own souls against the righteous anger of the Almighty. Be assured, that if you persevere in neglecting and setting it at naught, all the shame with which you now treat it, will, in the end, recoil upon yourselves. God will be ashamed of you, and will banish you for ever, with loathing and abhorrence, from the bliss of his presence. Christ will be ashamed of you, when he cometh in the glory of his Father. The angels will be ashamed

of you, for lighting a salvation whose mysteries form the subject of their deepest study, and of their loftiest wonder. The spirits of the just made perfect will be ashamed of you, because you have scorned the all-sufficient remedy which has brought them to the seats of blessedness. Devils will be ashamed of you, as having surpassed even their depravity, in that you have despised mercy never offered to them. And you will be ashamed of yourselves—ashamed of your desperate and suicidal conduct; and under the awful condemnation of God, the universal reprobation of his creatures, and the intolerable reproach of your own consciences, you will sink down, amid the torments of the fiery gulph, into unmitigated “shame, and everlasting contempt.”

SERMON CCCCXLIX.

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BROOKLYN, L. I.

MAN'S JUDGMENT AND GOD'S JUDGMENT.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.—
1 JOHN III., 20.

THERE are two constituted tribunals which take cognisance of men's actions, and authoritatively determine their character and destiny. These tribunals differ in their nature, order, and extent of power, and also as to the character and qualification of the judges who preside over them. The human *heart*, or conscience, is one of these tribunals, where reason sits as judge, and calls to an account for every passing deed, and gives sentence in this life. The tribunal of God is the other, where the enthroned Redeemer will hereafter sit in public judgment upon the conduct, and pronounce the eternal destiny of every creature. In the court of Conscience we are called to appear to-day, my hearers, to answer to charges involving all the interests of our deathless existence. Soon we shall stand at the higher and final tribunal, where, whatever may be the present decision in our case, unforgiven guilt will not go unpunished, and eternal truth and justice will be fully vindicated.

The first point to be settled by us respects the *character and*

qualifications of these respective judges. Everything depends, you perceive, upon this. If they are inflexibly just, we can only plead guilty and cast ourselves, as penitents, on God's mercy. If the human judge is imperfect and prone to err on the side of evil, it follows that we may escape the condemnation of our own heart, and yet find no favor hereafter. But if our own heart, with all its weakness and bias, *condemn* us, as guilty and unfit for Heaven, the expectation of acquittal in the last great day is vain and presumptuous.

I. What, then, is the character of Conscience as our moral judge in this life? It is not, in all respects, good. He is, at best, a weak, fallible, and imperfect judge, and therefore liable and likely to err in his decisions. So that it is unwise and unsafe to trust to his verdict only so far as it obviously accords with the great standard of appeal, the Word of God.

1. Conscience, in man, is a *depraved* judge. Man's moral as well as his intellectual and physical being, has come under the influence of sin. His moral sense is both impaired and vitiated by the state of his affections. The conscience is either so weakened in itself, or is subject to such strong depraved influences from without, that it is easily made to connive at sin and sanction the worst wrong. How often is the light in man darkness! Under the great law of depravity, how often does good become evil and evil good, right wrong and wrong right. The eternal line of distinction, drawn by the hand of God, between virtue and vice, becomes, in the habitual sinner, almost effaced, so that he is but poorly qualified to apprehend and realize the Truth. Hence his false views of the character of God—the nature and claims of his Law and Gospel—his own sinfulness and duty; in a word, of the whole matter of difference between him and his God. His conscience is so *perverted* from the right way, that he lives insensible to the enormity of his guilt; excuses his evil conduct, and labors to justify that in himself and others, which is palpably wrong. The verdict of Conscience, then, cannot be wholly confided in. You would not trust your life in the hands of a murderer, nor your property with a robber, nor your reputation to the judgment of a notorious slanderer. And for the reason, that their sense of right and wrong in the case is perverted, and so perverted as to make them unsafe judges. As well call on a *blind* man to see or a *deaf* man to hear. Accordingly, certain occupations are thought, by the common assent of mankind, to have such a perverting influence on the moral feelings, as to be an absolute disqualification in those who follow them, to sit in a judicial capacity even under oath. And now when the sinner's whole being is depraved, and his life one tissue of wrong and wickedness, is it likely that he will be a fair and strict judge in the case of his own soul against

God? And yet if condemned by a judge so depraved as Conscience, how shall you stand before God?

2. Conscience is a strangely *ignorant* judge. There is one great standard by which all beings and actions are to be tried. God has *revealed* the law to which we are subject, declared the principles by which we are to regulate our conduct, and on which the final judgment will proceed. And to know whether our conduct is good or evil, whether we merit the favor or incur the displeasure of God, we must know what the standard of right is, and test our hearts and lives by it. Now the sinner is marvellously *ignorant* of the law by which he is to live and finally be judged. He neither understands its principles nor feels its obligations. It does not stand out before his mind in the lustre of its perfection and in its wide and solemn relations. He does not "apprehend it, spiritually," nor see how broad and strict are its requirements. He fails, therefore, to see his conduct in its true light—fails to make a right application of the divine Law to his faith and practice. Hence so few unrenewed sinners condemn themselves as verily guilty and unfit for heaven. They judge by another standard than the law of God, admit their own inclinations, or the common opinions and practices of men, as the law in the case, and judge themselves accordingly.

3. Conscience is a *partial* judge. In similar cases he gives different and even opposite verdicts. He condemns the very thing in others which he freely allows in himself. The members of the church are often judged by the sinner with a severe and unjust judgment, while he lives insensible to his own aggravated guilt; avoids a verdict in his own case; and even makes a parade and boast of his goodness. It is not strange, therefore, that many who go clear at the bar of Conscience are condemned of God.

4. Conscience is a corrupt, *interested* judge. The relations of life, worldly interest, fashion, custom, prejudice and the like, act as *bribes* to bias his judgment and foredetermine his verdict. You wish to please your own heart and gratify its desires, and hence naturally look with an evil eye on whatever crosses your inclinations, or opposes your conceived interests. The sinner is not *willing* to know the Truth. He will not see things which relate to his conduct and duty as *others* see them. He wishes to come to no decision that shall alarm his fears and constrain him to break off his sins and become a new creature.

Finally, Conscience is often an *unjust* judge. Enlightened but in part, under the law of depravity, and subject to manifold evil influences, he decides frequently against all reason and Scripture: against the clearest dictates of a sound philosophy: against the Law of God, the peace and welfare of his own soul, and the rights and interests of his fellow-men. No, the ungodly man is not *willing* to criminate himself, and therefore reasons falsely, shuts

his eyes to the truth, resists conviction, and wrests the Scriptures to his eternal undoing.

Such is the *character* of that judge who is to decide on your case, as a sinner to-day. And if you cannot establish your innocence and escape condemnation before one so disposed himself to evil, surely you will not think to stand in the great day of righteous reckoning! Come, then, and let us enter upon this solemn work as in the presence of God, knowing that the whole case will go up to be reviewed and passed upon, by infallible wisdom and omniscient justice.

And what is the verdict of your conscience, to-day, hearer? Does it not condemn you before God and men? Does it not pronounce you a **SINNER**, guilty, unholy, and utterly unfit for Heaven? Does it not charge home upon you most serious and weighty offences, offences against which lie the tremendous threatenings of God's Word?

Do you not, in truth, hate the character of God, which holds all impurity in utter abhorrence, and the all-perfect Law of God, which forbids all sin in thought, word, and deed, and enjoins a universal spiritual obedience? Have you not rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and refused to be reconciled to God by him? Have you not grieved the Spirit of God and hardened your heart under his strivings? Have you not disobeyed the Truth, times innumerable, striven to shut out from your mind its convicting light, and silenced its voice of honest reproof. Have you not trifled with holy things, by speaking lightly of sin and religion, God and Christ, heaven and hell? Have you not strangely undervalued and neglected your Bible; preferred any other book to it, and set at naught its divine instructions? Has it not gone unread for weeks, it may be, months, the neglected yet constant witness of your conduct, gathering up its testimony for the final judgment? Have you not said many things to wound the feelings and injure the reputation of others? The mercies of God to you have been great and numberless. And have you not abused them? Have you not failed to make suitable returns? Have you not turned them against God and made them occasions of sin? Have you not wasted many precious years of probation, years in mercy given to secure your salvation and do good in the world? Have you not lived without prayer? lived a guilty, needy, dependent creature, without any practical recognition of the being of God and your obligations to him? lived in the reception and enjoyment of numberless blessings, renewed every morning and fresh every evening, with no heart to bless or love the Father of mercies? Has not your example, in your family and elsewhere, been evil, and calculated to mislead and injure? Have you not trifled with your religious feelings, resisted and overcome your convictions? As you think on the *past*, do not times and seasons

come fresh to mind, when you had a clear sense of your undone condition, wept over your sins, and besought the Lord for mercy, and yet you returned to your evil ways and plunged deeper into guilt? Have you not broken the most sacred promises which a creature can make—promises made to God and your own soul in times of danger, or in seasons of sickness or bereavement? Have you not, time and again, resolved to mend your ways and seek the salvation of your soul, and yet are found to-day in rebellion against God?

These are some of the sins brought against you, fellow-sinner. And have you not committed them, over and over again, a thousand times? Can you plead otherwise than *guilty* to them, separately and collectively? Does not the judge in your breast condemn your conduct in each particular as contrary to the known law of God, the Gospel of Christ, and your own true interests? Is it not so clear a case, that Conscience, with all its depravity and weakness and bias, can pass no other sentence than that of absolute and unqualified *condemnation*? Does not this human judge bring you in guilty and without excuse? *From the nature of the verdict given in by Conscience, from the absolute and fearful condemnation which it pronounces upon you in this life, we argue the impossibility of your standing in the judgment of the great day, the certainty and awfulness of your final overthrow.* Let us pass on to the Throne of Judgment, and learn the certain and dreadful end of transgression. *There*, where we shall all soon appear, the Law will take its course, testimony will have its due weight, truth and justice will triumph, and the wicked must fall, irrecoverably. This is rendered certain from the character and known will of the divine Judge. For,

1. He is *all-wise*. "He knoweth all things." With the law and the testimony in all their facts and bearings, and with your life and character, he is perfectly familiar. He knows the exact measure of light and mercy you have enjoyed—the extent of your privileges—the number and magnitude of your sins—the degree of your guilt, and the punishment which it deserves. You cannot deceive him, therefore, by false testimony or a show of goodness, nor carry your point by special pleadings. Everything is open and naked to his view, and he will search your heart, and read your thoughts, and unravel the whole intricate thread of life, and place every act and event of your being in the clearest light.

2. He is infinitely *just*. He knows what is right and will maintain it. Wrong in all its forms, by whatever name called, and however disguised, he is sure to detect and bring into judgment. No such allowance for temptation, weakness, and infirmity, will be made by him as we are now for ever pleading. The whole Truth will be brought out with convincing clearness. Every act of your life will be separated from all that is foreign to it and

put on its own intrinsic merit. And the whole matter will be summed up on the principles of strict justice, and a decision made that shall stop every mouth, and vindicate the injured character and insulted law of God in the eyes of the universe.

3. He is strictly *impartial*. No distinctions which men have set up, will be regarded by him. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the Jew and the Gentile, will stand on one common footing. The strict moralist, the exact formalist, and the painted hypocrite, will be classed with the unbeliever, the sinner, and the reprobate. All men will be regarded, in and of themselves, as guilty, and entitled to no favor. And the only ground of distinction that will there be acknowledged, is *moral character*—the only line of separation that shall be drawn by the final Judge, will be between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, the holy and the unholy. On the one side or the other of this great dividing line, will every soul of us and every creature of God, be found in the great day of final reckoning.

4. That Judge will not be *bribed*. No excuses which you can offer, no pleas that you may put in, no confessions that you might render, will have the least weight with him. Tears, and prayers, and entreaties, will then move him not. The day of mercy will be over and gone for ever. The tender and lowly Jesus who now pleads with you, will then appear in all the dread attributes of a just Judge; he will know you only as a daring and unforgiven sinner, and treat you as such. Stern and inflexible, he will try your case, weigh you in his balance, and pronounce your doom.

5. He will decide your case according to *the Law and the Testimony*. By his own high standard, and not according to those which man's wisdom or folly has set up, will he judge your cause. According to the principles laid down in his holy Word, will he determine your guilt and mete out punishment. And "the book will be opened," containing a full and impartial history of your life and probation, a record of every thought, word, and deed. The book of Nature will be opened, bearing on every page the impress of God's perfections. The book of Providence will bring to light all God's kind and gracious dealings with you. The book of Grace will speak out all its wonders, and show what God has done and Jesus suffered, to save you. The book of Conscience will declare the numberless times you were checked in your evil course, and reproved for your sins; and the book of Memory will set the Past before your eyes in the vividness and freshness of life; and the great "book of God's remembrance" will illustrate and clearly establish your character. O, what overwhelming testimony will these books bring to light! And there will be no *denying* the Truth. It will stand out like the sun in the heavens, clear, bright, irresistible. And in strict accordance with the divine law and

this testimony, will that sentence be from which there is no appeal, and which will fix the sinner's eternal destiny.

Finally, the great Judge who is to pronounce upon your case, will see that *his sentence is duly executed*. Once condemned of God, and there's no escape. No creature can deliver you out of his hands. His awful word, "depart," will hide you in hell for ever. And he will never think of you again with kindness or pity. Not one relenting will ever be kindled in his heart towards you. But the fruit of your own guilty doings will be given you; and the weight of everlasting condemnation will press upon you.

Before this great and awful Judge, dear hearer, your case will be called up. It *must* go up for final adjudication at Eternity's tribunal. It will come on soon. And it cannot be laid by, or passed over, or ruled out; it must come up fairly, too, and be tried on its intrinsic merits. No evasions, no equivocations, no special pleadings, will be allowed; no technicalities of law will give you any advantage; no flaw in the testimony will open to you a door of escape, and nothing in the character of the Judge will favor impunity. On the simple ground that you were a sinner and repented and believed, or hardened your heart in rebellion and refused the proffers of mercy, the whole case will rest.

And now, fellow-sinner, I ask, in all seriousness and faithfulness, if you can stand with confidence and hope before so strict and righteous, so holy and severe a Judge? If you cannot clear yourself at the bar of your own weak and perverted *Conscience*, can you reasonably expect to do it at the tribunal of Omniscient Justice. If you cannot possibly escape the condemnation of your own evil heart, and of your fellow-sinners, how shall you escape the condemnation of the holy and just God? If your own judgment and memory produce so fearful an amount of criminating evidence against you, how shall you answer, where hide your head, when "the books" shall be opened in the presence of the assembled universe, and their testimony produced? And if the condemnation which *Conscience* brings you under now be so heavy and grievous, to what depths of woe, and remorse, and despair, will you sink under *that* condemnation which "God and the Lamb" shall inflict upon you, in the day of righteous judgment?

Fellow-sinners! you must be condemned finally. You cannot stand in the judgment. And condemned there by God himself, your case, and with it your soul and immortality, will be *lost*—and lost *eternally*.

1. *Self-condemnation is not saving repentance.* The two are often confounded. Many a one flatters himself that it shall be well with him at last, because he condemns himself, confesses his sins, and feels remorse and anxiety on account of them. This he thinks to be repentance, and makes it the ground of hope. But the fact that conscience condemns us, is no proof of true repentance. The disposition

of the heart in reference to sin must be changed, and there must be an actual forsaking of it, if we would be forgiven. The murderer may clearly apprehend his guilt, and feel the keenest remorse of conscience, and be sorry for the deed, as causing his punishment, and yet experience no change of heart in relation to the act as a great moral offence in the sight of God. So you may see and confess your sins a hundred times a day, and still remain an *impenitent* sinner. Self-condemnation will not justify you with God. You may go through life, blaming yourself, weeping over your sins, and trembling in view of the terrors of the Lord, and yet find no mercy but swift condemnation in the judgment. "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant," will be the language of the Judge to such an one.

2. No man can infer his good estate, or final salvation, from the fact that his Conscience does not condemn him. For Conscience, as we have seen, is not an unerring judge. It is greatly impaired by reason of sin. It is often misled. It is liable to be grossly ignorant. Its judgment is warped or weakened by the state of the heart. It is, in a great measure, a creature of education, habit, custom. What conscience condemns in one man, it spares in another. What it condemns in one land or age of the world, it allows in another. The very act which to-day it pronounces a crime, it may to-morrow sanction as a virtue. And will you trust your soul in the hands of such a judge? Will you set up Conscience as the standard of appeal in so important a matter? Is it not presumption to reckon on Heaven with certainty because Conscience approves your conduct? No; God's Word is the only sure standard. While that condemns you, the approval of all creation is utterly vain and worthless.

3. *A man ought to deal honestly with his own Conscience.* God has constituted this tribunal in your soul, for wise and holy ends. Day by day it calls you to an account for your conduct, and either approves or condemns your actions. And though its decisions are not *always* right, yet when enlightened by God's Word and Spirit, it generally renders a true verdict. And is it wise or safe, then, to leave Conscience uninformed; to trifle with its dictates; or stifle its convictions? Is not every man called on, by all the interests which it guards, to give Conscience a fair hearing; to judge himself with honest judgment; and, if possible, so to live that his heart shall not condemn him?

4. We learn from this subject, the *worth of that blood* by which the Christian is justified at the bar of his own Conscience and accepted of God, though in himself guilty, and deserving of death. The Christian admits the truth in all its extent and aggravation; pleads guilty, and casts himself on the mercy of God. When Conscience, armed with the terrors of a violated law, lays hold of him, he turns to the Cross and pleads the blood of atonement, and

straightway its wrath is appeased—its thunder stayed. And in the final day, that blood will clear him and render the Judge his friend. And is that blood to be *despised*? Oh! is the blood of the Lamb of God, by which we have peace, which speaks our pardon and seals our redemption, is it a vain thing?

5. We infer from our subject, *the certain final overthrow of the hopes of multitudes*. Men will trust to their own judgment, and so are deceived. They will act a *false* part with Conscience, and so it slumbers over their guilt, or comes to sanction their wickedness, and their fears are lulled to sleep, and they cry, "Peace, peace," when God has not spoken peace to them. Yes, you may judge *wrong* judgment here, and stumble along through life, but God will set all things right at last. Every decision to which you may come, during your probation, he will review; every act scrutinize, and bring to bear on the great final question. And, O, what a judgment will that be! How many who passed man's judgment will not endure that day's fiery trial! How many hopes will it disappoint, and hearts make for ever sad!

Finally, *How full of anxiety and trembling ought every soul of us to be, in anticipation of the last great judgment?* There, you and I, my hearers, have each a cause pending—a cause involving our never-ending existence. And soon—O, how soon—we shall stand there and know the final and solemn decision. And are you **READY** for that awful hour? Are you *prepared* to answer for all your conduct at the bar of Jesus Christ? O, have you found forgiveness and acceptance of the most high God? Are you living with that day of days, in full and constant view? You have a hope: is it one that death cannot blast—that the wreck of worlds shall not overthrow—that the great day of guilt's terror and doom will not disappoint? If not, while judgment lingers and damnation is restrained, up, and "flee from the wrath to come." For it is a fearful thing to go to the bar of an angry God—to meet his frown—to quail under his lightning glance, and be doomed by him to endless perdition.

